

It was recently reported on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019 that U.S. Attorney Leslie Goemaat wrote in a court filing for the Washakie Renewable Energy case:

*“Former Order members who will testify as witnesses for the government, will testify that the Order promotes the principle of ‘bleeding the beast.’ Members of the Order are taught that because the government has purportedly persecuted the Order for its polygamist practices, Order members have a duty to ‘bleed the beast’ – to fraudulently obtain government benefits or resources in whatever manner possible.”*

<https://fox13now.com/2019/07/04/polygamy-is-intertwined-in-kingston-fraud-case-government-argues/>

**This statement is completely FALSE.** This type of doctrine has NEVER been endorsed by the Davis County Cooperative Society (DCCS; Co-op) or Latter Day Church of Christ (LDCC) leadership. It has been a **long standing policy**, that DCCS “members are self-sustaining by means of their own labors” if at all possible (DCCS, Articles of Incorporation, 5D; 1941).

Our founding members began this self-sustaining policy under C. Elden Kingston in the depths of the Great Depression when he rejected a \$10,000 government subsidy offered to new cooperatives through the Farm Credit Act of 1933 which was extended through the time of the DCCS founding. Elden is reported to have said to members “If we can’t succeed without the [subsidy], we will not succeed with it.”

Years later, when the federal food stamp program became available nationwide in 1974, Cooperative members were advised to avoid applying for benefits for fear of persecution and unfair scrutiny of familial associations. After a number of years, less than 9% of DCCS households (a percentage 1/3 the national average), who were truly in a very destitute state, applied for benefits lawfully and within the bounds of what was allowed.

In 1983, issues arose when the national application format did not clearly outline entitlement for the unique plural family situations present in the Co-op. Attorneys representing the State Assistance program moved directly against individual leaders for repayment of funds they deemed to be outside of federal entitlement guidelines.

Rather than risk persecution for polygamy and fight the case, leaders settled without admitting guilt for the requested amount of \$250,000 in an attempt to pay back all the assistance that had been received and more. One member directly involved in the case states “The settlement amount was much higher than the total amount [members] had ever received from the government. We never received the amount of assistance a normal citizen would have in the first place because the government wouldn’t allow us to apply for it like a normal citizen.”

After the 1983 case, members were encouraged to stay away from government programs and rely as much as possible on their own means and other members for sustenance.

In 2005, the offices of Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff and Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard published '*The Primer*' as a guideline for government agencies when dealing with individuals in the polygamous lifestyle living within the two states. The opening paragraph of the 'Basic Guidelines' section of the document reads "Every man, woman and child in polygamy who is seeking government help should be treated with dignity. However, each case should also be scrutinized to ensure the services are truly assisting the individuals in need."

*The Primer* also contains a 'Glossary' section which introduces readers to the term "Bleeding the Beast" and clearly connects this term to fundamentalists who teach "...that 'bleeding the beast' will assist God in destroying the "evil" U.S. government and is considered a righteous endeavor." The Primer goes on to connect this to the isolated communities based geographically on the Utah Arizona Border known as the FLDS. Fear of government and society as a whole had caused the FLDS to geographically segregate themselves from other communities for many years. This is NOT and has never been the case for the DCCS.

Within 1 or 2 years after the release of *The Primer*, media outlets began making statements between 2006 and 2011 erroneously attributing 'bleeding the beast' terms to all fundamentalist groups and people. Each time these stories focused on the DCCS, waves of many dozens of new un-solicited audits were levied against individuals and corporations, known or suspected to be members of the DCCS. Everything from State taxes, Federal taxes, corporate taxes, DWS, SNAP, WIC, etc. has been audited dozens if not hundreds of times. Each time turning up no significant violations or nothing at all.

Active and long-time members will recall very frequent encouragement by DCCS and church teachings that members in the Co-op should be "self-sustaining and self-perpetuating" or the strongly worded stance of leaders in open meeting of "Compliance! Compliance! Compliance!" both of which flies in the face of false accusations of a 'bleeding the beast' policy. Government witnesses claiming to be former members are individuals who, were mostly passive or inactive through the majority of their tenure, and who did not publicly adopt the 'bleeding the beast' terms until after they were available to read in the erroneous media reports mentioned above.

In 2016, Federal agencies raided businesses and homes believed to be related to WRE transactions. Again, a large wave of audits were levied against, law-abiding, un-related, un-solicited individuals, and again, nothing was found among the general DCCS population. (Salt Lake Tribune, February 7, 2018; *"Utah investigated the polygamous Kingston Group for welfare fraud 2 years ago. It didn't find any."*)

DCCS households participate in government assistant programs at a rate significantly below the national average. However, adult DCCS members who have no connection to the WRE case have been audited at a rate 9.5 times higher than the average population in the last 3 years, with no pattern of fraud being found!!

This is blatant government discrimination against an entire community based on unfair bias.

The statements by the US Attorney and former members describing a widespread pattern of fraud is not only untrue, it's unfounded and offensive to most DCCS members. The data from hundreds of thorough audits across multiple State and Federal agencies does not support their claim, and it's frankly irresponsible for the Federal prosecutor to blanket statement a group of people in this way without regard to the government's own facts.

Attributing the practice of 'bleeding the beast' to the DCCS as a way of "destroying" the "evil" U.S. government is even more absurd considering the majority of members are quite conservative in their political views, with most members believing the U.S. Government and the Constitution to be inspired by God. So much so that DCCS young men have fought for the country we love in every major conflict since World War 2, some even losing their life, with continued active service members today.

We have the right to live and enjoy the freedoms that our family members have fought and died for! We live and work freely throughout our communities, vote, are politically active, attend town hall meetings and salute the flag of our country with pride and dignity. Every year, church meetings in the month of July are opened and closed by patriotic hymns like "God Bless America!", "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" and "The Star-Spangled Banner". July lessons and sermons focus on stories of inspiration from God in the founding of the United States

We pride ourselves in the savings we bring to the State of Utah through our private schools, saving Utah over \$8 Million dollars in 2018 alone! This along with millions of additional taxes our members pay lawfully throughout their communities.

It should be very clear those involved in the WRE case broke from DCCS tradition in many ways. It should also be clear that DCCS members as a whole find the actions charged in the case to be not only repugnant, they are immoral and go completely against everything we have stood for from our very foundation. Any person who says otherwise clearly does not know our heritage and is not familiar with current facts.

We re-affirm to all members and non-members alike that The Davis County Cooperative Society condemns in the strongest terms fraudulent business practices and stresses that this behavior goes completely against our beliefs and principles. We cannot and will not condone or support anyone found to be engaged in the behavior detailed in the case or any fringe behaviors that could be described as 'bleeding the beast'.

Business owners who are members of the Davis County Cooperative have the autonomy to make their own business decisions and they are encouraged to conduct business in a fair and lawful manner through every facet of their activity.

Additionally, we urge both member and non-member business owners to fulfill their civic and ethical obligations to the communities they serve and to abide by the law.

As members of the DCCS, we feel obligated to exercise our rights as citizens to state the facts and push back against false and discriminatory accusations levied on an entire community because of the actions of just a few.